

Story 1677 (1962 Tape
erased)

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Stingy Ahmet and His Pears

Once there was and once there wasn't a stingy farmer named Ahmet. This Ahmet had a large orchard of pear trees bearing delicious fruit

From selling these pears, Ahmet had made a fine fortune. Only one thing gave him more pleasure than counting the pears in his orchard. Yes, it was counting the golden coins he had gained from selling his pears.

One day Ahmet piled his handcart with two bushels of his best pears and wheeled the cart off to the nearby market town. There he found a good spot in the marketplace and began to call buyers to his cart. "Pears! Pears! Ahmet's pears! Come and buy Ahmet's delicious pears!"

Soon a large crowd gathered around Ahmet's cart. Everyone knew how sweet and juicy Ahmet's pears were. And many people reached into their sashes to get the handful of kuruş¹ that Ahmet asked for one pear--a high price, but a fair price for one of Ahmet's golden pears.

¹The para was formerly the smallest monetary unit. There were 40 paras to the kuruş and 100 kuruş to the

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Suddenly a ragged dervish appeared at the edge of the crowd. He stared at Ahmet as Ahmet sold pear after pear. "My good man," said the dervish, "please give me one of those beautiful pears.

"Give you one of my pears?" said Ahmet, his face red with anger. "How do you suppose I could earn my bread and cheese if I gave my pears away?"

One man in the crowd whispered to another, "He does not know stingy Ahmet, or he would not ask him to give anything, especially one of his pears." And the crowd watched to see what Ahmet would do about this holy man and his question.

The dervish asked again, "Please, my good man, let me have one of those beautiful pears

"If I gave one to you," said Ahmet, "I would have to give one to every beggar and thief in the marketplace. You are no more than a thief, trying to get something for nothing!"

Just then a soldier walked by. "Soldier!" called Ahmet.

Turkish lira. By mid-20th century, devaluation of Turkish money had eliminated from use the para, and by the 1970s the kuruş also fell out of circulation. When the lira fell to the value of 1/10 of a U.S. cent (and much lower in the late 1980s), the kuruş became utterly meaningless.

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"Take this beggar away. He is trying to spoil my business."

the soldier just stood to watch. There was no reason to take that old gentleman away. He was doing no harm by asking questions. And many more people came to see what Ahmet would do about this harmless old man.

"Please, my good man," said the dervish, "give me just one pear. You would not even miss that one with all the pears you have."

Ahmet said angrily, "You heard me the first time! I do not give my pears away. Now get along and let me sell my pears." In the quarrel with the dervish, Ahmet had not sold a single pear.

"Why not give him a pear--perhaps a bruised one--for the love of Allah?" asked a bystander. But Ahmet grew even angrier at the idea that one of his beautiful pears might be bruised.

"Here, father," said the soldier, taking a handful of kuruş from his sash. "Let me buy you one of Ahmet's pears, and may you eat it with a hearty appetite." And he gave the dervish the ripe pear that Ahmet handed him for his money.

old man thanked the soldier, and then he held

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the pear up so all could see it. "Friends," he said,

know I am just a dervish, serving Allah and His poor creatures. You have all seen how stingy Ahmet is with his pears. But I am a different kind of man. I have many beautiful pears, and I can share them all with you."

"Where are your pears, father?" asked a man in the crowd. "And why didn't you eat your own pears instead of asking Ahmet for one?"

"Well," said the dervish, "first I must plant a tree grow them."

Several people in the crowd laughed. But they all watched as the old man ate the pear, leaving just one seed. "You will see," he said. Taking a pick from the pack on his back, he dug a deep hole in the ground at his feet. Then he carefully planted the seed and covered it with earth. "Now," he said, "I need some hot water."

"Hot water!" said Ahmet scornfully. But he, too, watched this strange old man. A passing tea seller gave the dervish some hot water from his urn, and the seed was watered.

Then, to the surprise of the crowd, a small green shoot appeared where the seed had been watered. That

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shoot grew, and divided, and grew, and divided, until in just a few minutes there was a young tree covered with leaves.

As they all watched, the tree grew and grew. Pear blossoms appeared, and then young fruit, and then pears and pears--golden pears as beautiful as Ahmet's

The dervish smiled. "Now, my friends," he said, "I have a fine pear for each of you." And he handed the pears around, beginning with Ahmet, until all the pears were gone. Ah, but they were delicious, those pears. Even Ahmet agreed that they were.

Suddenly the dervish swung his pick and chopped down the tree. Putting the tree over his shoulder, he smiled at the crowd and then he walked away.

Ahmet shook his head, amazed, and then he turned to his handcart. To his surprise, not a single pear was left in the cart. And a handle of his cart was missing.

"Thief! Thief!" Ahmet cried. "That dervish gave every one of my pears away! And he even took my cart handle!"

Ahmet started running after the dervish, but the old man had gone entirely. And there on the ground

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was the cart handle. As Ahmet stared wildly here and there, laughter bubbled in the marketplace

Shaking his head, Ahmet put the cart handle back in its place. Tup! Then he pushed his handcart back home. There would be few gold coins for this day's work

As for the story of the dervish's pear tree, it grew and grew, and it is still told in Turkey today.